

632 unit. The various lin chang assist the li chang in carry-
631 ing out government policy. Connected through this struc-
ture are the superordinate government levels such as town-
ship, county, province, and ultimately, the Republic.

621 This account omits one of the most significant
units for most residents, the ts'un (village). As a unit
of the official government, it has few functions, serving
only to bound areas, as a registration unit, and as a
postal address. However, the village appears to be a
prime identification unit for the typical rural Taiwanese.
In the Sanlei area, there is a perfect agreement as to
621 who is and who is not a member of which ts'un. In Taiwan
632 as a whole, in order that li be approximately equal in
size, large villages are divided into two or more li;
medium-sized villages constitute a li; and small villages
are combined to form a single li. Talei Li is an example
of the last process, a combination of five ts'un.

• 660 Informal political activities vary at distinct
[632] levels. At the township level, the li is united as part
of a minority faction. Within the li, there are two
contrasting sets of factional divisions which cut across
each other, i.e., there are some overlapping memberships.
One pair of factions is regionally based, T'oulei and
Ehlei against the other three villages; the other pair
of factions is ideologically based, the young progressives
against the older traditionalists. Kinship loyalties.

- 66 agnatic and affinal, add another dimension to this complexity for most of the residents are members of families whose forefathers occupied the village over an extended period of time. The effects of alliances or feuds in the past often continue to be important long after the original principals have disappeared from the scene.

571 Other important governmental or quasi-governmental organizations which influence local affairs include the school and parent teacher's association, police organization, farmers' association, and fruit cooperative. Completely informal units which are important include two temple organizations, various sworn brothers and god's organizations, and several cooperative work groups.

The various kind of social groups discussed above mean that no individual is an isolated unit. He is necessarily involved intimately in a large number of social groups, some in conflict, forcing a choice between alternatives. Although the priorities are not always clear, the general agreement is that the family is usually the most important social group. Most new residents are

[648] quickly incorporated into various units. Only a few outsiders such as Mainlanders remain relatively isolated but even Mainlanders can become relatively involved if they behave in accordance with village norms over an extended period of time.

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Although there are a number of minor political parties, Taiwan essentially has a one-party government run by the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party of China). The party maintains scattered branch offices throughout Taiwan such as the one in Hsin Tien which includes Talei Li in its area of responsibility. Several villagers have joined the party although only a few remain active.

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Party membership is not necessary for important political offices as demonstrated by the elections conducted in the early part of 1968 when officials who were not members of the Kuomintang captured about 20% of the seats in the local elections and 10 of 71 provincial seats. Also, the mayors of two of the largest cities in Taiwan, Taipei and Kaohsiung, are not party members (Plummer, 1969: 19). Nevertheless, as revealed by these same figures, members of the Kuomintang captured a majority of the seats as usual. Moreover, successful candidates who do not belong to the Kuomintang usually run as independents rather than as members of an organized opposition party.

There are occasional arrests for political or ideological reasons and rumors of many more to such a degree that many rural people believe that to get involved in politics may be to court arrest.

Provincial Government

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Taiwan is one province of the Republic of China with its capital near Taichung in central Taiwan. Its main

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573 unfilial or frighten older men with threats of physical
561 violence. The threats have always been sufficient to
627 insure proper behavior. In periods of the year when there
[626] is high probability of stealing such as near New Year's
Day, or after a theft has occurred, various associations
have taken responsibility for a night patrol in the
village. Thieves from outside the li were caught twice
in the last three years and were severely thrashed before
turning them over to the police. The unit also supports
561 its members in conflict or adversity. Political support
66 for a fellow member is near automatic and it is signifi-
573 cant that most local leaders have connections with the
larger kinship units discussed in the last chapter and
are also members of fairly large sworn brothers associ-
ations. Local political leaders attempt to enlist
association support and several usually make courtesy
calls long enough for a quick drink and snack at various
association meetings.

561 There are few village men who fail to join a
573 sworn brothers association as young men. A few groups
have added members later in their existence although
most stick to the original membership roster. A migrant
to the area may establish good relations and be invited
to join an ongoing group whose members are his approximate
[562] age. There are many similar clubs all over the area
near Hsin Tien but there is no structural equivalent
for women.

783 sporadically all during the day. After each character was
796 written, the sand was smoothed out again in preparation
787 for the next. These characters were all special spirit
writing, direct communications from the gods which only the
shaman is able to read and interpret. The statements may
be criticism or praise of specific villagers or general
information. Eventually, one character would proclaim
when the fire for the walk should be started.

783 After about four hours, around 11:00, everyone quit
796 for lunch. It is possible that the gods could call for
the fire within a very few minutes after the ceremony started, but no ceremony in memory however, had ever started before the first day's lunch break. Lunch was much more elaborate than usual and there were many guests in attendance. Outsiders had been arriving all day during the morning to observe the men running in the fields and to
[602] become guests for lunch. Few villagers did any regular
[593] work that day; even much of the cooking was performed by
[628] outsiders such as ch'in ch'i (affinal relatives) or sworn
brothers from other villages who worked without pay. In
turn, Sanlei would provide cooks for ceremonies, funerals,
and weddings in other villages. Four sworn brother associations gathered for an extra lunch together. Politicians from Hsin Tien and the county visited each of the associations in turn for a few minutes and also visited the lunches hosted by the more important people.